



The nexte thyng that I requere thee,
Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght;
And I wol telle it yow, er it be nyght.

HAVE heer my trouthe, quod the knyght,
I grante.

THanne, quod she, I dar me wel avante
Thy lyf is sauf, for I wol stonde therby,
Upon my lyf, the queene wol seye as I.
Lat se which is the proudeste of hem alle
That wereth on a coverchief or a calle,
That dar seye Nay, of that I shal thee teche.
Lat us go forth withouten lenger speche.

The rowned she a pistel in his ere,
And bad hym to be glad and have no fere.

HAN they be comen to the court,
this knyght

Seyde, he had holde his day, as he
hadde hight,
And redy was his answer, as he sayde.
ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,
And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,
The queene herself sittynge as a justise,
Assembled been, his answer for to heere;
And afterward this knyght was bode appeere.

Every wight comanded was silence,
And that the knyght sholde telle in
audience,
What thyng that worldly women loven best.

This knyght ne stood nat stille as doth a
best,
But to his questioun anon answerde
With manly voys, that al the court it herde:

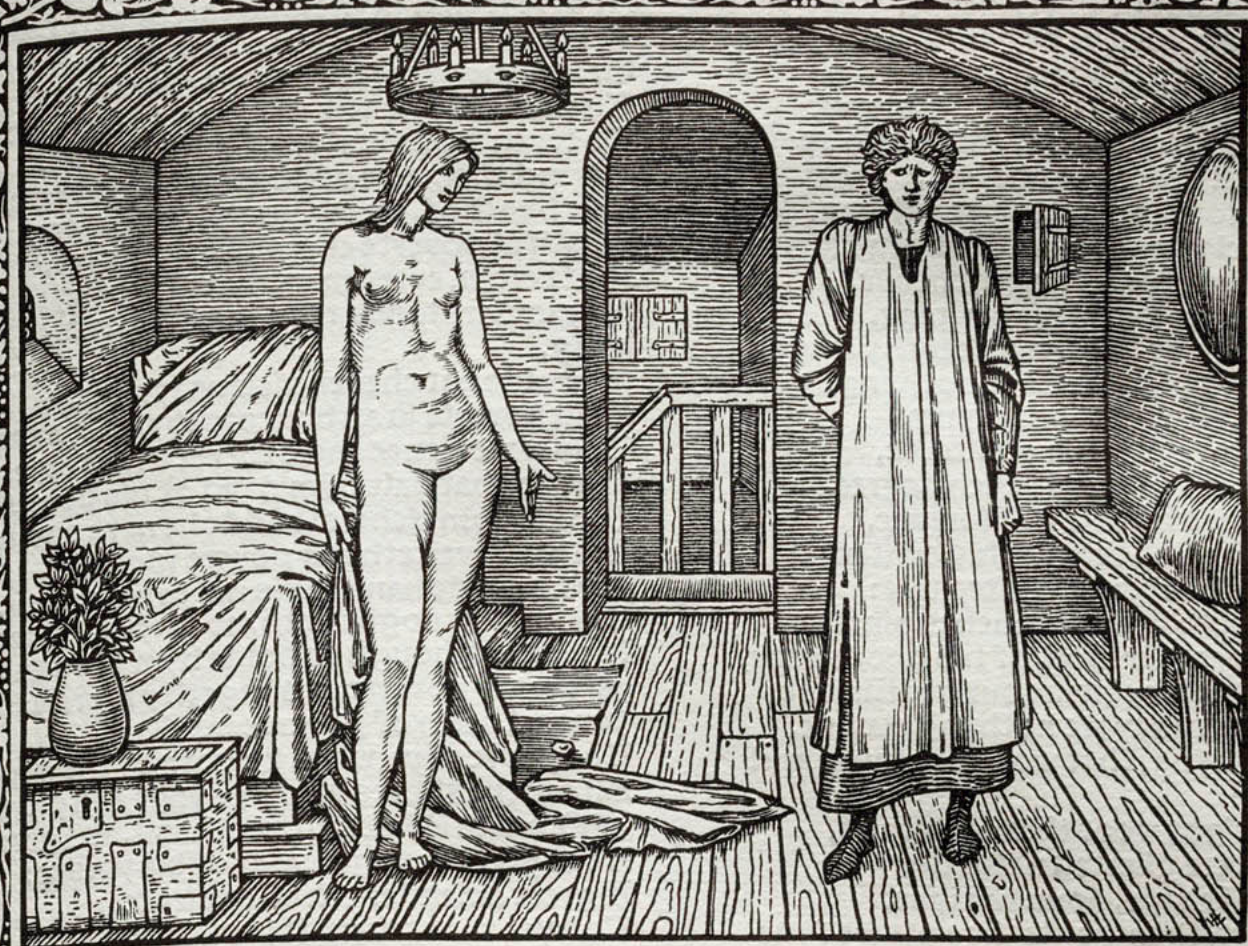
My lige lady, generally, quod he,
Alommen desiren have sovereynetee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above;
This is youre moost desir, thogh ye me kille,
Dooth as yow list, I am heer at youre wille.

Nat the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,
Ne wydwe, that contraried that he
sayde,

But seyden, he was worthy han his lyf;
And with that word up sturte the olde wyf,
Which that the knyght saugh sittynge in the
grene:

Mercy! quod she, my sovereyn lady queene!
Er that youre court departe, do me right;
I taughte this answer unto the knyght;
for which he plighte me his trouthe there,
The firste thyng I wolde of hym requere,
He wolde it do, if it lay in his myght.

Before the court thanne preye I thee, sir
knyght,
Quod she, that thou me take unto thy wyf;
for wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf.
If I sey fals, sey Nay, upon thy fey!



This knyght answerde, Alas, and
weylawey!
I woort right wel that swich was my
biheste.

for Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste!
Taak al my good, and lat my body go.
Nay thanne, quod she, I shrewe us bothe
two!

for thogh that I be foul, and oold, and poore,
I nolde for al the metal, ne for oore
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love!

My love? quod he, nay, my dampna-
cion!
Alas! that any of my nacioun
sholde evere so foule disparaged be!

But al for noght, the ende is this, that he
Constreyned was, he nedes moste hire wedde;
And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.

Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,
That, for my negligence, I do no cure
To tellen yow the joye and al tharray,
That at the feeste was that ilke day.

To which thyng shortly answeren I shal;
I seye, ther nas no joye ne feeste at al,
Ther nas but hevynesse, and muche sorwe,
for prively he wedded hire on morwe,
And al day after hidde hym as an owle;

So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule.

REEET was the wo the knyght hadde
in his thoght,
Whan he was with his wyf abedde
ybroght.

He walweth, and he turneth to and fro;
His olde wyf lay smyllynge everemo,
And seyde, O deere housbonde, benedicitee!
fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?

Is this the lawe of kyng Arthures hous?
Is every knyght of his so dangerous?
I am youre owene love, and eek youre wyf;
I am she which that saved hath youre lyf,
And certes, yet dide I yow nevere unright.
Why fare ye thus with me this firste nyght?

Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit;
What is my gilt? for Goddes love tel it,
And it shal been amended, if I may.

Amended! quod this knyght, alas! nay,
nay!
It wol nat been amended nevere mo,
Thou art so loothly, and so oold also,

And therto comen of so lough a kynde,
That litel wonder is, thogh I walwe and wynde.
So wolde God, myn herte wolde breste!
Is this, quod she, the cause of youre
unreste?
Ye, certainly, quod he, no wonder is.